Research Paper – Islam and Slavery: An analysis of the Scriptural, Linguistic and Historical Status of Slavery in Islam with a look at Shades of Muslim Apologetics

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Abstract

With the rise of the "Islamic State" group or IS, the topic of slavery and Islam no longer remained a theoretical discussion, but a matter of practical implementation at the hands of IS and having real consequences to those whom IS had claimed to be enslaved. The impact was global. The issue of Islam and slavery gained major prominence in the media and academia, both global and Muslim, each participant in the debate presenting a perspective, whether in defence of Islam or against. Muslims, it appears, felt the need to account for the development. Does their religion condones this or not? This paper examines scriptural, linguistic and historical issues surrounding the question of slavery and Islam with a view to broadening the discussion and revealing a degree of nuances which might not always be mentioned in common public discourse.

Keywords: Slavery, Islam

Introduction

According to various media accounts (news24.com 2014) as well as its then online mouthpiece *Dabiq*, the then online mouthpiece of IS, (IS 2014), IS[1] revived slavery with the enslavement of Yazidi women after the capture of Sinjar, an act which the scholars of IS had endorsed (IS 2014).[2] This revival of slavery at the hands of IS, has seen intensified discussions on slavery in Islam in the media (e.g. The Economist 2015),[3] numerous *fatwas*[4] (e.g. Dar-Alifta Al-

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[1] The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) renamed itself the Islamic State (IS) in June 2014 (Washington Post 2014).

[2] The 2014 *Dabiq* article will be examined in further detail in the section discussing IS as an affirmer of slavery.

[3] Although such discussions may be global in nature, this paper will confine media references to English language media for the sake of brevity, English being the most widely used language in global media forums.

[4] Question posed to a *muftī* (juriconsult) (Hallaq 1994).

Misrriyah 2016) and academic circles (e.g., Brown 2017). It provided ammunition for anti-Muslim propaganda (e.g., thereligionofpeace.com n.d.). [5] These references are but a sample of written discussion on the topic and do not include a possible qualitative research on verbal discourse on the topic, amongst Muslims and others. Each of these players have their own interlocutors and set agendas, be it sensational news, dissemination of facts as they see it, Islamic apologetics, or anti-Islam polemics, etc.

This paper attempts to present a broad overview without ascribing to any of the above perceptions and views. In so doing, it hopes to probe the complexities of a phenomenon which is often over simplified. The discussion will commence with looking at the terms for slavery in the Qurʾān from the lens of language. Stemming from the linguistic examination, is the racial implications of the terms used. Having studied the terms used in the Qurʿān from a linguistic perspective, the texts of the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth* are thereafter examined for a deeper religious understanding of the scriptures[6] The Europeans also contributed to the dynamics of Islam and slavery during the colonial period.[7] It cannot be seen how Muslim states would have abolished slavery at the same rate without outside influences. A broader historical contextualisation is therefore relevant, without aiming to be a shield for apologetics, especially if IS rhetoric against the "Crusaders" and linking the revival of slavery with the revival of Islamic law is to be further understood.[8] Finally Muslim views on slavery are explored. On the one hand?, there are those like IS who extol slavery, while their opponents deny the legality

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[5] Although undated, the article makes reference to IS and an event it claims to have occurred in 2017. The article would thus have to be dated 2017 or 2018.

[6] "(narrative, talk) with the definite article (*al-ḥadīth*) is used for Tradition, being an account of what the Prophet said or did, or of his tacit approval of something said or done in his presence." (Robson 2012)

[7] "The campaign to eradicate slavery became a tool in service to colonial political interests and a crucial part of propaganda in the foreign policy of the British and the French." (El Hamel 2013)

[8] "This large-scale enslavement of *mushrik* [polytheist] families is probably the first since the abandonment of this *Sharī'ah* law" (Dabiq 2014:15)

of slavery in Islam. In between there are varying shades such as those who maintain the theoretical legality of slavery while prohibiting its implementation.

1. Linguistic Definitions

An overview of the definitions, etymology and usage of the term "slave" in English and Arabic will be attempted. transpires. Examining the outlook and linguist background provides broader context of the interlocutors. Arabic is examined as the religious language of Islamic scripture.

1.1. English Definitions

The absence of scholarly unanimity on what exactly the word "slavery" means is striking. An examination of the various definitions offered in the *Oxford English Dictionary* alone provides scope for various interpretations as to who is a slave and who is not (OED Online 2018). The first entry is ambiguous, "Severe toil like that of a slave; heavy labour, hard work, drudgery". The term "…like that of a slave..." is a comparison, and a comparison by definition means that there are two separate entities. Thus according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* one who is not a slave may in fact be in a state of slavery. How then to proceed with a discussion when the defining term is already so murky?

Other definitions in the same source do not detract from the ambiguity. "The condition of a slave; the fact of being a slave; servitude; bondage (ibid.)" covers various shades of meaning including servitude. "The condition or fact of being entirely subject to, or under the domination of, some power or influence (ibid.), another definition which lends itself to further ambiguity." The next definition again includes a comparison which recalls the ambiguity in the first definition cited, "A state of subjection or subordination comparable to that of a slave; also with *plural*, an instance of this (ibid.)" Yet if one is in a state "comparable to that of a slave" does

that not imply that one is not a slave, hence not in state of slavery? It would appear that let alone the controversy in discussing slavery, whether from in relation to Islam or other perspectives, the definition of slavery itself lends the word to ambiguity and controversy.

Richard Hellie seemingly defines slavery with clarity as, "…condition in which one human being was owned by another. A slave was considered by law as property, or chattel, and was deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons." He thereafter alludes to the ambiguity, stating, "There is no consensus on what a slave was or on how the institution of slavery should be defined (Hellie 2018). That Hellie consistently employs past tense "was" suggests that he confines slavery to the past tense by definition. This restriction in the definition may be problematic to some who would argue that slavery does in fact exist in various form in the contemporary era, not least the IS endeavour at reviving slavery.

1.2. Arabic-Islamic Definitions

1.2.1. ʿAbd

Following the above linguistic look at the term "slave" from an English perspective, this section aims to gather the Arabic terms found in the Qurʾān. The examination remains linguistic. Scriptural/religious discussion will be presented in a later section.

The most common word for slave in the Qurʾān is ʾabd. Edward Lane translates it as both "a male slave" and "servant, or worshipper, of God, and of a false god, or of the Devil" (Lane 1968:1935). An example of where it appears in the Qurʾān is Q. 18:66:[9]

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[9] Pickthall seems to have split Q. 18:18 into two verses, making every verse thereafter to be numbered one number higher than in other versions (Pickthall n.d.: 213) . Thus his Q. 18:66 is Q. 18:65 according to Asad and others (Pickthall n.d.: 217, Asad 1980:449, Ali 1938:748).

> Then found they one of Our slaves, unto whom We had given mercy from Us, and had
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> taught him knowledge from Our presence (Pickthall n.d.: 217)

1.2.2. Raqabah

As per Lane, *raqabah* originally means lower neck and by extension it is applied to the whole human being, e.g. "his sin be on his own neck". By further extension it means slave. The plural is *riqāb* (Lane 1968:1133). An example of where it appears in the Qurʾān is Q. 58:3:

> Those who put away their wives (by saying they are as their mothers) and afterward
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> would go back on that which they have said; (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing
>
> of a slave before they touch one another (Pickthall n.d.: 390)

1.2.3. Mamlūk / Mā Malakat ʾAymānukum

Milk means possession (Lane 1968: 1223). It is the root word for *mamlūk*, or possessed thing and thus a slave, and also the root-word for the verb *malakat* in *mā malakat ʾaymānukum*, which Pickthall translates as "those whom your right hands possess…"An example of where it appears in the Qurʾān is Q. 4:25:

> And whoso is not able to afford to marry free, believing women, let them marry from
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> the believing maids whom your right hands possess. (Pickthall n.d.: 82)

2. Racial Issues Inherent in Linguistic Usage

The words a people use for something may reveal much of the attitude, history and society of one or both parties. Both English and Arabic reveal issues of racial bias inherent in the words used for slaves.

2.1. Racial Connotations in English

Although the definition of "slave" in English is prone to much ambiguity, its etymology appears more settled. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the etymology of slave ultimately links up to…

> medieval Latin *sclavus* , *sclava* , identical with the racial name *Sclavus* (see Slav n. and
>
> adj.), the Slavonic population in parts of central Europe having been reduced to a
>
> servile condition by conquest; the transferred sense is clearly evidenced in documents
>
> of the 9th century (OED 2018)

Thus the name of a specific ethnic group was forever linked to slavery simply because of them being a prime target for enslavement in European history. By contemporary standards, associating a specific ethnic group with a socially degraded status would not be common as in the past and might be considered politically incorrect.

2.2. Racial Connotations in Arabic

Lane draws a distinction between the usage of ʿābd and *māmlūk*. The former is used for a male black slave, while the latter is used for his white counterpart. Lane further adds that, "this distinction has long obtained." (Lane 1968:1935).

Lane does not qualify this usage to any particular time or place, or offer a reason. It therefore appears to be that both English and Arabic speakers imbued their speech with racial perceptions of their perceived social and racial inferiors. In the case of English-speakers, the word "slave" would imply the superiority of the Western European over his Slavic counterpart. Residue of this centuries old anti-Slav racism by Western Europeans would fester and manifest as late as the previous century:

> The Germans also drew upon tradition. Images of inferior and hostile Slavs – above all
>
> Russians and Poles – had been nurtured in certain quarters for centuries, and served as
>
> justification for aggressive designs upon the East (Connelly 1999: 23)

In the Arab world, a distinction was made amongst slaves, based skin colour. This may be understood in the context of Arab perceptions of themselves, as being white and superior to their black African slaves. That this attitude and perception existed amongst Arabs since the pre-Islamic era can be gleaned from Muḥammad's condemnation in the greater context of his condemnation of pre-Islamic racism, blood feuds and economic subjugation via usury, "There is no superiority of the Arab over the non-Arab or the white over the black; except through piety and righteous deeds." (Juwaynī, A.M., 1992: 27). This white-black dichotomy is further evidenced by Egyptians granting higher esteem to sellers of White slaves who were, "grouped with the highly respected guilds." (Clarence-Smith 2006: 35)

As Lane did not offer a reason for this racial distinction in words, a suggestion might be offered based on the linguistic connotations of the words. *Mamlūk* is intrinsically linked to *milk* or possession. One values and prizes one's possessions. *ʿAbd* is associated with serving another and being of a lower social status. Thus the former term would be applied to the more prized Whites who in practice not only had a higher status than Blacks, but even assumed authority over former masters and freedmen in ruling over Egypt, Syria and India etc. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online], n.d.). *ʿAbd* would be relegated to those on a lower social rung, Black slaves, notwithstanding the positive religious connotation which will be discussed.

These examples provide a hint that the suffering which slaves may have experienced, were not necessarily based on the teachings or scriptures of Christianity and Islam per se, but on ethnic, racial and social structures and prejudices. A parallel example would be that of apartheid implemented for racial and economic reasons, but which academics sought to justify for religious reasons. In 1944 Professor J.D. du Toit stated, "I don't have a text, but I have the Bible, the whole Bible. My argumentation [for apartheid] would proceed from Genesis to Revelation." (Vosloo R.R 2015) Furthermore, racist justification from the Bible was not

confined to apartheid, but the "Curse of Ham" was specifically invoked to justify the European Transatlantic Slave Trade (Whitford 2010:27)

3. Usage in the Qurʾān

3.1.1. ʿ*Abd* and its Usage in the Qurʾān

It would appear that the second meaning of ʿ*abd* as worshipper is generally the intended meaning when used in the Qurʾān, especially in the plural form of ʾ*ibād*. For example, Q. 3:79, "It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book, and Wisdom, and the prophetic office, should say to people: 'Be ye my worshippers [ʾ*ibād*] rather than Allah's'" (Alī, A. 143)[10]

However, from the classical commentaries, such as ʾal-Qurṭubī, it appears that the first meaning is also intended. For example Q. 17:1, "Pure is He who transported His ʿ*abd* by night…" This translation of Q, 17:1 is my own and I have left ʿ*abd* untranslated. I have chosen to do this in order to provide a context for the commentary that follows. As will be discussed, the translations of many contemporary translators avoid the term "slave" and thus render the commentary unintelligible. The commentators, such as Muḥammad ʾibn ʾAḥmad ʾal-Qurṭubī (d. 1273) celebrate the title of slave as the meaning of ʾ*abd*:

> In regards the statement of the Most High, "(with) His slave" the learned ones state,
> "Were there a title for the Prophet, Allāh's salutations and peace be upon him, more
> noble than that, He would have called him by it, during that elevated condition"….
> (2007 181).

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[10] "ᶜAbdullah Yusuf All's translation of the Qur'an is a classic rendition of the Qur^n in English written at the crossroad of Muslim s entrance into modern times It was one among the few new English translations of the Qur^n produced at a time when translating the Qur^n was a novel and contentious undertaking in the Muslim world." (Yusuf, I., 1997)

Although the context of the above is clearly that of human slavery unto the divine, and not humans "owning" humans, there is a noticeable contrast between Qurṭubī celebrating the meaning of ʿabd as slave compared to modern translators evoking the less offensive "servant" in their translations of the same ʾāyah, a word which is not a synonym to "slave". This includes at least three prominent translators (Ali 1938, Asad 1980 and Pickthall 1998). Thus Asad translates Q. 17:1 as, "LIMITLESS in His glory is He who transported His servant by night" (1980 417). Yusuf Ali translates the same verse as, "Glory to (God) Who did take His Servant by night…" (1938 693). Pickthall translates it as, "Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night" (n.d. 2040. The term "slave", which the early Muslims did not shy away from, appears to have become odious to these translators. All three have pointedly chosen "servant" as the correct translation of ʿabd instead of slave". Choosing another term seems to be a means of subtly distancing the contemporary Muslim from the institution of slavery.

Using the Qurʾān dictionary of Dr Rūḥī ʾal-Baʿlabakkī, the word ʿabd appears 134 times in various noun forms in the Qurʾān (masculine, feminine, singular, dual and plural forms together in various combinations with different pronouns) ; ʿibādah (worship) which is the maṣdar (root-word) of ʿabd appears 9 times; and various verbal derivatives appear 123 times (Baʿlabakkī 1999).[11]

Of the 134 noun appearances, 128 refer to the relationship between God and humans, irrespective whether the translation is "worshipper" or "slave" as in Q. 3:79 and Q. 17:1 mentioned above. There are only five instances in three ʾāyāt where slavery between humans is referenced:

And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maid servants. If they be poor; Allah will enrich them of His bounty. Allah is of ample means, Aware. (Q. 24:32)[12]

O ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. And for him who is forgiven somewhat by his (injured) brother, prosecution according to usage and payment unto him in kindness. … (Q. 2:178)

Wed not idolatresses till they believe; for lo! a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress though she please you; and give not your daughters in marriage to idolaters till they believe, for lo! a believing slave is better than an idolater though he please you. (Q. 2:221)

In regards the verbs, only one appearance (ʿabbadta - enslaved) is in reference to human slavery:

And this is the past favor wherewith thou reproachest me: that thou hast enslaved the Children of Israel. (Q. 26:22)

From the above it appears that the Qurʾān only references human slavery seven times in four verses out of a total of 266 times that the word which can be used for slavery appears. More than 96% of the Qurʾān's usage of the word is upon man's relationship to God. This would suggest that where the Qurʾān as a text mentions slavery, the overwhelming focus is on man's slavery??? to God, not man enslaving man. Even where human slavery is mentioned it includes mention in a negative light (Q. 26:22) in condemnation of Pharaoh, and an exhortation to care for the social conditions of slaves (Q. 24:32).

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[12] The translation used for these verses is Pickthall's (n.d. 255)

1.1.1. Raqabah and its Usage in the Qurʾān

Raqbah and its plural *riqāb* appear nine times in the Qurʾān in seven verses (Baʿlabakkī 1999). Unlike *ʿabd*, where the Qurʾān focuses on humans being slaves unto God, eight of the nine usages of *raqabah*/*riqāb* refer to human enslavement:

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free… (Q. 2:177) (Pickthall n.d.: 48)

The offerings given for the sake of God are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage… (Q. 9:60)[13] (Asad 1980: 269)

It is not for a believer to kill a believer unless (it be) by mistake. He who hath killed a believer by mistake must set free a believing slave, and pay the blood money to the family of the slain, unless they remit it as a charity. If he (the victim) be of a people hostile unto you, and he is a believer, then (the penance is) to set free a believing slave. And if he cometh of a folk between whom and you there is a covenant, then the blood money must be paid unto his folk and (also) a believing slave must be set free…(Q. 4:92) (Pickthall n.d.: 88)

Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will take you to task for the oaths which ye swear in earnest. The expiation thereof is the

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[13] Here I have used Asad's translation, as Pickthall's "captives" is too narrow. WHY AND HOW.

feeding of ten of the needy with the average of that wherewith ye feed your own folk, or the clothing of them, or the liberation of a slave… (Q. 5:89) (Pickthall n.d.: 104)

Those who put away their wives (by saying they are as their mothers) and afterward would go back on that which they have said; (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch one another…(Q. 58:3) (Pickthall n.d.: 390)

Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is! (It is) to free a slave, (Q. 90:12-13) (Pickthall n.d.: 441)

The above suggests that wherever the Qurʾān uses *riqāb*/*raqabah* in the context of human slavery, it is an exhortation to the virtue of manumission as means of attaining God's pleasure (Q. 90:13). The Qurʾān does not however leave it to human goodwill to free his/her fellows, but sets freeing of slaves as the penalty for numerous specific crimes, enumerated above.

1.1.2. *Mamlūk / Mā Malakat ʾAymānukum* and its Usage in the Qurʾān

Mā malakat ʾaymānukum translated as "those whom your right hands possess" (Pickthall) is another term found in the Qurʾān for slaves. It occurs 15 times in the Qurʾān (Baʿlabakkī 1999). Unlike *ʾābd* which is mostly focused on humans slavery unto God, and *raqabah* which is mostly used to encourage manumission of slaves, *mā malakat ʾaymānukum* appears to be used in four diverse ways.

The bulk of the mention of *mā malakat ʾaymānukum* is within the context of sexual purity and permission to engage in sexual congress with *mā malakat ʾaymānukum* in addition to one's spouse. For example:

And who guard their modesty. Save from their wives or the (slaves) that their right hands possess, for then they are not blameworthy, (Q. 23:5-6) (Pickthall n.d.: 248)

These mentions occur nine times in Q. 4:3, 4:24, 4:25, 23:6, 24:31, 33:50 (twice), 33:52 and 70:30.

Converse to the nine mentions of the rights of owners to sexual congress with *mā malakat ʾaymānukum*, is a verse which focuses on specific rights of slaves. Q. 24:33 specifies two specific rights of slaves. They may seek a contract to purchase their freedom and may not be forced into prostitution:

> …And such of your slaves as seek a writing (of emancipation), write it for them if ye are aware of aught of good in them, and bestow upon them of the wealth of Allah which He hath bestowed upon you. Force not your slave girls to whoredom that ye may seek enjoyment of the life of the world, if they would preserve their chastity… (Pickthall n.d.: 256)

Two verses, Q. 24:58, 33:55, do not have the formal legal ramifications or rights entrenched as the above verses. They form a third category describing social etiquettes:

> O ye who believe! Let your slaves, and those of you who have not come to puberty, ask leave of you at three times (before they come into your presence): Before the prayer of dawn, and when ye lay aside your raiment for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. (Q. 24:58) (Pickthall n.d.: 258)

A fourth category encourages kindness and fulfilments of rights in a more general manner. For example:

> And serve Allah. Ascribe no thing as partner unto Him. (Show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and into the neighbor who is of kin (unto you) and the neighbor who is not of kin and the fellow traveller and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess. Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful, (Q. 4:36) (Pickthall n.d.: 83)

These mentions occur twice, in Q. 4:36 and 24:33.

Finally, there is a fifth category encompassing two verses, Q. 16:71 and 30:28. Here *mā malakat ʾaymānukum* are not addressed literally in terms of law, etiquette or rights, but are used as metaphors in a parable of the relationship between God, the provider of humankind:

> And Allah hath favored some of you above others in provision. Now those who are more favored will by no means hand over their provision to those (slaves) whom their right hands possess, so that they may be equal with them in respect thereof. Is it then the grace of Allah that they deny? (Q. 16:71) (Pickthall n.d.: 199)

Although the slaves are metaphoric here, the broader context and mention of slavery elsewhere brings these verses into the understanding of slavery as a (social) reality at the time of the Qurʾan's revelation.

1.1.3. Implied Slavery in the Qurʾān

In addition to the three explicit terms for slaves found in the Qurʾān, *ʿabd*, *raqabah* and *mā malakat ʾaymānukum*, slaves are also implicitly mentioned, without a specific descriptive term. I can only identify one such occurrence:

> Allah coineth a similitude: A man in relation to whom are several part owners, quarrelling, and a man belonging wholly to one man. Are the two equal in similitude? Praise be to Allah! But most of them know not (Q. 39:29) (Pickthall n.d.: 331)

2. Ḥadīth Literature

A systematic discussion on slavery and Islam would focus on Ḥadīth literature after the Qurʾān. Practical considerations do not allow for an in-depth listing in this paper. As Justice Taqi?? ʿUthmānī stated:

Such hadiths are plenty. There isn't enough space here to exhaust them (ʿUthmānī 2006).

A few will instead be quoted under the section of the *Benign Apologist* as these are the scholars most inclined to cite this form of literature.

3. Slavery as a Mode of Religious Propagation

While the IS might have steered contemporary discussions on slavery and religion to focus on Islam specifically, the historical record shows that slavery was a medium for a dominant civilisation to transfer its values and religion, to a subdued civilisation. This can be true whether the dominant civilisation was Islamic, Christian or other. Furthermore, this relationship was often not one-sided. The dominant civilisation???? transmitted values by means of slavery, and slaves did not always resist, but some are recorded to have appreciated their slavery, not in itself, but as the means by which they attained the "higher values."

3.1. Christianity and Slave Conversion

Albert J. Raboteau records the Christian attitude as follows:

> From the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, conversion of slaves to Christianity was viewed by the emerging nations of Western Christendom as a justification for enslavement of Africans. When Portuguese caravels returned from the coast of West Africa with human booty in the fifteenth century, Gomes Eannes De Azurara [sic][14], a chronicler of their achievements, observed that "the greater benefit" belonged not to the Portuguese adventurers but to the captive Africans, "for though their bodies were

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[14] Gomes de Zurara (1410?-1473/4). Portuguese court chronicler and author of *Cronica da Guine*. (Blackmore 2000)

now brought into some subjection, that was a small matter in comparison of their souls,

which would now possess true freedom for evermore." (Raboteau 1978)

Conversely there were slaves who would agree with Gomes, appreciating the fact that they had received Christianity by means of their slavery. Thus Phillis Wheatley, expresses her concurrence:[15]

Let us rejoice in adore God's infinite love in bringing us from a land semblant of

darkness itself, and where the divine light of revelation (being obscured) is in darkness.

Here the knowledge of the true God and eternal life are made manifest… (ibid).

These passages reflect the feelings of an educated slave, who to an extent was happy that she had been enslaved.

3.2. Islam and Slave Conversion

The Muslim historian and *mufassir* (commentator of the Qurʾān), ʾIsmāʿīl ʾIbn Kathīr (d. 1372)[16], records the following conversation between the Muslim envoy to the Persians, Ribʿī bin ʿĀmir[17]. It transpired before the battle of Qādisīyah, between the Arabs and Muslims:

They asked, "What has brought you here?" He replied, "God has sent us that we may

bring out whom He wills from the worship of *ʿibād*[18] to the worship of God, from the

narrowness of the world to spaciousness, from the tyranny of religions to the justice of

Islam. Thus He sent us with His faith to His creation, to call them to it. We shall accept

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[15] Phillis Wheatley (1753?-1784). Enslaved in Africa at a young age, she was the first African American to publish a book. She was accepted as a member of the Old South Congregational Church. (Scheick, W.J., 2013)

[16] ʾIbn Kathīr was a "great historian, ḥadīth scholar, and Qurʾanic exegete" (Mirza 2014)

[17] Ribʿī bin ʿĀmir, a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and was a deputy commander in the Arab campaigns in Iraq during the rule of ʿUmar (ʿAsqalānī 2004).

[18] *ʿIbād* is the plural of *ʿabd*, which can be translated as slave or worshipper as discussed above.

from him who accepts it and leave him alone, but shall forever fight he who rejects it until we attain God's promise." (ʾIbn Kathīr 2003)[19]

There is apparent overlap between the quotes of the Portuguese chronicler and the Arab envoy – both allude to the benefit of dominance in spreading their respective faiths. However, distinct differences in philosophical outlook exist as well. Firstly, Gomes's statement emphasises slavery as an institution in spreading the faith, whereas Ribʿī's dominance, which will be decided on the battlefield, emphasises a military and political dominance, which might or might not include slavery. Secondly, Gome's spread of faith is consequential to enslavement, whereas Ribʿī offers faith without enslavement. Thirdly, there is no hint, in the quote at least, that the Portuguese would desist from slavery if a population embraced Christianity, for economics (including slavery) seems the priority. On the other hand, Ribʿī offers withdrawal from "he who accepts", for domination is a means, not the priority.

Islam too had its version of Phillis Wheatley, slaves who "give thanks" for slavery as the means of their salvation in Islam. Prof. Thomas Arnold stated as such: [20]

> … devout minds have even recognised in enslavement God's guidance to the true faith, as the negroes from the Upper Nile countries, whom Doughty met in Arabia. [21] "In those Africans there is no resentment that they have been made slaves…even though cruel men-stealers rent them from their parentage…for such they do give God thanks that their bodies were sometime sold into slavery!" (Arnold 2003: 416-417)

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[19] The translation from the Arabic is my own.

[20] Prof. Thomas Walker Arnold (1864-1930) British orientalist. "At the age of twenty-four he was appointed teacher of philosophy at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh." (Robinson 2011)

[21] Doughty, Charles Montagu (1843-1926), English traveller and poet, author of *Arabia Deserta*. (Koger 2013).

Earlier in his book he narrates from Doughty, words which parallel that of Wheatley:

> The Galla freedman whom Doughty met at Khaybar certainly exhibited a remarkable degree of zeal for his own faith. He had been sold off from his home when a child and sold as a slave in Jiddah; when Doughty asked him whether no anger was left in his heart against those who had stolen him and sold his life to servitude in the ends of the earth, "Yet one thing," he answered, "has recompensed me, - that I remained not in ignorance with the heathen! – Oh, the wonderful providence of Ullah! (sic) whereby I am come to this country of the Apostle, and to the knowledge of the religion!" "Oh! What sweetness is there in believing! Trust me, dear comrade, it is thing above that which any heart may speak; and would God thou wert come to this (heavenly) knowledge; but the Lord would surely have a care of thee…how good it were to see thee a Moslem… (Ibid: pp. 347-8)

Thus parallels exist in both Islam and Christianity in which slaves are reported to have expressed gratitude for their enslavement as the means of their religious salvation. Further complicating the image of slavery is the phenomenon of slaves in East Africa who did not recognise their emancipation by the British and insisted that manumission certificates signed by their former owners (Clarence-Smith 2006: 146). The colonial emancipation was not recognised by some freed slaves. They still obtained permission from former owners in order to marry, for without such permission the children of slaves are illegitimate in Islamic law (ibid: 147). Beyond the freed slaves, there were those who were never formally slaves themselves, but descendants of slaves, who felt that they still fell under the purview of slave laws in terms of religion. For example, women of slave descent women in Mali were recorded to observe the

ʿiddah of slave women (two months and five days),[22] instead of the full four months and ten days of free women (Soares 2000: 281).

On the other hand, slavery was also an obstacle to people embracing Islam. Arnold discusses how in East Africa Muslims were regarded as enslavers. Once the slave-trade was suppressed, these same peoples were inclined to enter Islam:

> Given up wholly to the pursuits of commerce or slave-hunting, the Arabs of Eastern Africa exhibited a lukewarmness in promoting …their faith…in contrast to …their co-religionists in other parts of Africa…   The suppression of the slave-trade, with the extension of European rule over East Equatorial Africa, was followed by a remarkable expansion of Muslim missionary activity…An instance of …West Usambara, which was said in 1891 to be still closed to Islam; the feeling of both chiefs and people were hostile to the Muhammadans, who were hated and feared as slave-dealers; but when the days of the slave-trade were over and an ordered administration established…they achieved the conversion of some of the greater chiefs, who afterwards exercised a similar influence on chiefs of an inferior degree (ibid).

It would therefore appear that in the case of East Africa, the Muslims bore an attitude towards slavery, distinct from the former two incidents. The Catholic Portuguese engaged in slavery as an objective but appreciated the by-product of their slaves converting. The Arabs at Qādisīyah focused on expansion of the faith without necessarily eschewing slavery. The Arabs in East Africa not only focussed on slavery without a thought to the faith, as in the case of the Portuguese, but conducted themselves in such manner as to be in effect an obstacle to the

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[22] *ʿiddah* is the waiting period of a widow or divorcee.

expansion of Islam. Thus their loss of power removed this obstacle and proved an ironic boon to Islam which expanded under German rule of the region.

4. Slavery and Muslim Apologetics

Muslim responses to "outside" questioning about slavery in Islam range from complete affirmation, apologetics by way of contextualising the discussion, to abolitionism. Within each response there are varying shades to be found. A consensus is not easy to find. Thus it might be debatable where exactly to classify a particular view, as some views encompass elements of both affirmation of slavery and simultaneously arguing for its restriction, which may be argued as a possible tentative move towards abolishment. Thus such views might not fit into a neat affirmation of slavery or abolitionist categorisation.

4.1. Affirmation

Historically, affirmation of slavery in Islam is found in classic works of jurisprudence. In present times, the only known advocates of slavery among Muslims are IS and Boko Haram.

4.1.1. Historical Affirmation

The classic works on Islamic jurisprudence mention slaves as a fact of life. In dealing with this fact of life, slaves were discussed as a separate legal category to free folk, thus rules and regulations are mentioned under various topics. Clarence-Smith avers that rulings on slavery touch on a third of the text of *ʾal-Hidāyah*, the influential code on *Ḥanafī* jurisprudence (2006: 22-23). An examination of the book shows 514 topics of which 19 explicitly mentions slaves[23] (Marghiyānī 2010)[24] If Clarence-Smith is accurate, it would imply that there are slave rulings

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[23] Including *kitāb* (book), *bāb* (chapter) and *faṣl* (section).
[24] E.g. *Kitāb Nikāḥ ʾal-Raqīq* (marriage of slaves) and *Kiṭāb ʾal-ʾIbāq* (runaway slaves).

under topics not explicitly discussing slaves. This would further imply the ubiquity of slavery in Islamic jurisprudence and possibly Islamic history in a much more subtle manner than an explicit 19 out of 514 mentions. For example, the following ruling is mentioned in regards the change in status of a slave woman within the ambit of the discussion of *nifās* (period of impurity after childbirth) without creating a separate topic which explicitly mentions or alludes to slaves, "The miscarried child whose form is partially clear, places the mothers in the state of n*ifās*, and through it the slave woman becomes an *ʾumm walad…*" (Marghiyānī 2010: 226)

Early jurists did not advocate total abolition in the contemporary sense. Instead, some attempted to expand the categorisation of certain people as free, in opposition to those who held them as slaves. For example, ʾIsḥāq bin Raḥwayh, amongst others, held that an *ʾumm walad* was a free widow when her owner died.[25] She was not a slave to be sold as others opined (Spectorsky 2002:57-58). Ibn Rajab held the same view, as will be discussed in the next section on IS. Thus ʾIbn Rāḥwayh and ʾIbn Rajab are not known to advocate the abolishment of slavery, yet within the spectrum of the debate they took the first steps to its restriction and ultimate disappearance, a stance Clarence Smith terms as "quasi-abolishment" (2006: 129-150)

4.1.2. Contemporary Affirmation – the case of IS

Boko Haram of Nigeria is reported to have engaged in enslavement (Petri 2018). However, as Petri does not substantiate his claim with evidence, we will focus on the IS only.

In Issue 4 of *Dabiq* its English mouthpiece, the IS exhibits at least three points justifying slavery on the basis of Islamic law. Firstly, its reintroduction and practice of slavery:

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[25] "…*umm al-walad* is a slave who has borne her master children" (Spectorsky 2002: 57)

> After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the *Sharī'ah* amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State's authority to be divided as *khums* [the state's one-fifth share of booty]. This large-scale enslavement of *mushrik* [polytheist] families is probably the first since the abandonment of this *Sharī'ah* law (2014:15)

The author of the above article is not identified. Here slavery is presented as an accepted fact. A portion of a *ḥadīth* is quoted by way of mentioning slavery within an interpretation which matches the norm of the apocalyptic IS world view, without delving into a juristic discussion on slavery, "…one of the signs of the Hour was that 'the slave girl gives birth to her master.'" (Dabiq 2014:15)

Younus Mirza provides an interesting analysis on how IS selectively used the *ḥadīth* portion (Mirza 2017: 594-5).[26]

Mirza's analysis of the IS affirmation of slavery can be summarised in three points. Firstly, IS has extracted an isolated sentence related to eschatology from a *ḥadīth*, which is largely related to matters of faith. It is the faith dimension which has always been the focus of Muslim scholars. Secondly, the sentence IS quotes is short, but has at least two crucial words narrated in alternate manners. Thus all other factors aside, there cannot be certainty on the IS interpretation which IS presents as the absolute indisputable truth. While the first two points may have some validity for IS from purely academic point of view, Mirza's third point is to accuse IS of disingenuously quoting classical scholars in such a manner as to present the

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[26] The IS author is not specifically identified, emphasised by the fact that a "Umm Sumayyah" pens the next slavery article in Issue 9. The gender cannot be assumed to be male as Mirza implies.

opposite of what they actually espoused, i.e. to support the IS narrative on the reintroduction of slavery (ibid: 577-599)

The IS cites three respected authorities to support their interpretation on the re-introduction of slavery: al-Nawawī (d. 1277), ʾIbn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d.1392) and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852) (ibid: 10). While all discuss various interpretations, of which some might coincide with IS's ideals, their final conclusions are at variance with IS. ʾal-Nawawī is clear that a statement dealing with eschatology has no weight in Islamic legislation (ibid: 590). ʾIbn Ḥajar concurred with this view (ibid: p. 592). ʾIbn Rajab did extract legislative value from the *ḥadīth*, but to argue in favour of restricting slavery, not expanding it. [27] He argued that the *ḥadīth* meant the same as another which stated, "Her child freed her." (ibid: 590-1).

Another IS article in Issue 9, penned by "Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirah" is entitled, *Slave-Girls or Prostitutes?* It attempts a less apocalyptic methodology in justifying slavery from the Qurʾān, *Ḥadīth* and Islamic history. She quotes three verses from the Qurʾān,[28] and certain *ḥadīth* mainly related to battles, for example:

> So Sa'd said, "I rule that their fighters be killed and their families be enslaved." So Allah's Messenger (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "You have indeed judged in their affair by the ruling of Allah" (2015: 45)

Her third point of reference are incidents extracted from Islamic history texts, such as "*Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*" (sic), in an attempt to show that slavery existed amongst the early Muslims after Muhammad, for example ʿAlī, son of Ḥusayn, had concubines (ibid: 47).

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[27] Specifically in regards ʾ*umm walad*.
[28] Q. 4:3, Q. 24:32, Q. 23:6 and Q. 2:221.

Tellingly, Umm Sumayyah does not reference jurists from any period or school of Islam. IS does not allow for any nuance, complexity, or contextuality which jurists might have discussed, whether in defence of slavery, restricting it, or abolishing it. For IS there is only the plain fact of the mention of slavery in Islamic texts and every further detail is not up for discussion. Scholars of Islam, who disagree with IS, are only mentioned dismissively without reference to their proofs:

> As for those who rebuked the Khilāfah's soldiers for saby,[29] then this is not surprising at all, for they themselves are those who crippled the obligation of jihād with false suspicions and crooked arguments. They are the same beards and their sheep-like followers. Why should we criticize them now? Isn't it sufficient for us to know of their
>
> sinful sitting back that has bloated their potbellies and increased their weakness abundantly? (ibid: 47).

4.2. Shades of Negation

The past two centuries have witnessed the various scholars of various schools advocating the abolishment of slavery. Each tackled the issue in a unique manner. However, it appears that few could negate the basic historical legality of slavery in Islam.

In 1881 the Moroccan scholar, Aḥmad bin Khālid ʾal-Nāṣirī, wrote an attack on slavery. He argued that no war after the companions of Muḥammad was a *jihād*. Thus the status of all slaves thereafter was challenged (Clarence-Smith 2006: 137).While he thus disputed the legality of twelve centuries of slavery in Islam, the argument does not negate legality during

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[29] *Sabī*, captive or slave (Lane 1968:1303). Umm Sumayyah did not deign to translate the Arabic term, which is not generally understood by non-Arabic speaking Muslims. If not an oversight in using a term that perhaps is commonly used in IS territory, it may be an intentional rebuke to Muslims for not only abandoning slavery, but not even knowing the terminology of the practice.

the first generation. Furthermore, the question arises, what if a "properly constituted *jihād*" were to be instituted as IS claims it has achieved?

ʾal-Nāṣirī influenced the Mauritanian, Shaykh Mūsā bin ʾAḥmad ʾal-Fūtī (d. 1945). He published his main work in 1925 in which he further narrowed the era of legality when he declared that Muḥammad had freed all his slaves (ibid: 144). Although narrowing the period of legality, even his doctrine of the absolute freedom of all human beings had to acknowledge an original period of legal slavery.

A 1912 *fatwā* of the Shiʿī scholar ʿAlī Nūr ʿAlī Shāh paralleled the view of ʾal-Nāṣirī, from a Shīʿah angle. Both scholars admitted a brief period during which slavery was legal in Islam, both argued that with the change in circumstances this initial legality was no longer in effect. Shāh declared, "…any persons, men or women alike, who are claimed as slaves, are in legal fact free…" Whilst admitting to an era in which people could be enslaved within the ambit of Islamic law, Shāh however argued that as the legal justification of enslavement (*jihād*) was no longer properly constituted since the disappearance of the Twelfth Imām, there could no longer be any enslavement or slaves (ibid: 130-31).

In 1914 *fatwā* of the ʿIbādī Qāḍī of Zanzibar, Shaykh ʿAlī bin Muḥammad ʾal-Mundhirī, helped facilitate the forced sale of slaves to the British and thus their emancipation, since "…the aim was honourable under Islam" (ibid: 133). Yet in as much as Mundhirī facilitated the practical abolishment of slavery in Zanzibar, the need for a sale before manumission would still imply the original legality of the slave status.

4.3.   Apologists

There appears to be two forms of Islamic apology on slavery. Some focus on defending Islamic slavery as being conceptually benign, while others employ an offensive against the West in

detailing the actions of the west and adding further details to the discussion, to expand the discussion to include actors outside of Islam.

4.3.1. Benign Apologists

Cardinal Charles Lavigerie seems to have summarised the attitude of the benign apologist in 1888:

> The Quran does not enjoin slavery, but merely permits it. Indeed, the Quran goes further, because it places the liberation of captives at the top of the list of merciful deeds, through which believers may be worthy of heaven (Clarence-Smith 2006: 17).

The benign apologist does not deny the legality of slavery, but emphasises those exhortations of the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth, some of which have been listed previously, which not only encourage compassionate treatment of slaves, but encourage their manumission. An example is the *fatwā* on the website of the Salafi Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Munajjid.[30] Before arguing at length how Islam commands compassionate treatment of slaves, it states:

> We reply emphatically and without shame that slavery is permitted in Islam, but we should examine the matter with fairness and with the aim of seeking the truth, and we should examine the details of the rulings on slavery in Islam (Munajjid 2008)

Similarly, Taqī ʿUthmānī, states:[31]

> Refutation of those who Claim that Slavery is Abrogated

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[30] "Al-Munajjid is considered one of the respected scholars of the Salafist Movement" (Fakude 2014)

[31] "Justice Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Usmani is a leading scholar of Islamic jurisprudence. He is considered to be the intellectual leader of the Deobandi movement. He served as Judge of the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan from 1982 to May 2002" (ed. Schleifer 2018: 60)

….they said that slavery is not permissible in Islam today, and it was only allowed in the beginning of Islam; … From those in India who defended this weak and false claim is the famous writer Chiragh Ali, who … wrote an article… to prove this claim and he produced therein weak evidences which will make even the bereaved laugh. We have no need to cite these evidences and refute them as they are such that all who have the slightest grasp of religion and knowledge will regard them as baseless… (ʿUthmānī 2006 1:259-268)[32]

Both ʾal-Munajjid and ʿUthmānī draw attention to conditions of slaves in other religions/civilisations and numerous *Ḥadīth*s which exhort the Muslims to treat slaves well. ʿUthmānī states:

Such hadiths are plenty. There isn't enough space here to exhaust them. In sum, Islam changed the system of slavery in a manner that made it one of mutual love and brotherhood, and nothing remained in Islam except the name of slavery (ibid).

Examples of these "plenty hadiths" which ʿUthmānī cites, include:

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: "Your brothers, your servants, Allah has placed them under your authority. So whoever's brother is under his authority, he should feed him from what he eats and clothe him from what he wears. Do not burden them with what overpowers them, and if you burden them, help them."

…he said: "The one who is harsh to his slaves will not enter paradise." …And he (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: "Whoever slaps his slave or strikes him, its compensation is to free him." …

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[32] The translation used is that of Zameelur Rahman, 2013.

… Anas ibn Malik (Allah be pleased with him) narrates: "The general will of the
Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) when death came to him
and he was giving up his soul was: '[Be steadfast on] prayer, and [take care of] what
your right hands possess.'"

In short, the benign apologists affirm the rulings of the previous jurists in the theoretical legality
of slavery, but unlike IS, they ban enslavement in practice:

…most of the nations of the world have … agreed that … captives of war will not be
put into slavery, and most of the Islamic lands today are participants of this agreement
… so it is not permissible for an Islamic country today to put a captive into slavery as
long as this pact remains (ibid).

4.3.2. Apologists on the Offensive

Jonathan Brown and Abdullah Hamid Ali might be prime examples of apologists taking the
offensive in their article, *Slavery and Islam: What is Slavery?* (Brown & Ali 2017).[33] Although
the interlocutors are not specified, the opening lines of the article seem aimed at detractors of
Islam who use slavery as an issue to target the religion:

Is there slavery in Islam? When people pose this question they usually assume it's the
Islam part that needs clarification. Everyone already knows what slavery is. Actually,
it's quite the opposite. The Islam part is relatively straightforward. The real problem is
trying to pin down what we mean by slavery (ibid).

 The main thrust of the article seems to conjure so many details and devices so as to distract
the reader from central questions which others, such as Muftī Taqī, do comment on, but which

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[33] The article on the web link https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/jonathan-brown/slavery-and-islam-what-is-slavery/ lists Brown as the sole author. The same page provides access to a PDF download which includes Ali as co-author.

Brown and Ali seem to evade, such as "Did Muslims engage in enslaving non-Muslims?" "How do the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth treat slavery?" "Did Islam abolish or phase out slavery in any form?" etc. Slavery in China and Rome might be of academic interest, but does not have direct bearing on the discussion of Islam and slavery. These seem unnecessary distracting details. Even more distracting, and astonishing to find in an academic paper, is the employment of a character from a science fiction series, and even providing a link to the website of the science fiction series.[34] Brown and Ali weave their argument around a time travel journey of the sci-fi television character, Dr Who. This lends the article an atmosphere of entertainment and brings into question the purposefulness of the authors in addressing one of the most serious topics in the history of human discourse.

In their attempt to weave a distracting tapestry of entertainment, history, science fiction, philosophy, politics and religion, Brown and Ali at times point their magician's wand, and expect the reader to see the magic rabbit of their argument, whereas proper citation instead of literary devices would be less confusing and more factual:

> We voyage still onward in the TARDIS to a new land where, passing down the road, we see a crew of dark-skinned youths clearing brush in the hot sun, their legs shackled and all joined by chains. A light-skinned man watches over them with a weapon in hand…the last place we visited was a land in which slavery had long been illegal: rural Arizona in 2004, where the local sheriff was overseeing a juvenile chain gang (ibid).

The authors describe a scene of criminals in forced labour in such manner as to evoke imagery of slavery... This is to strengthen their point, "It's tempting to assume that …there is something

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[34] http://www.thedoctorwhosite.co.uk/tardis

called slavery … and that we'd know it if we saw it." In other words, the reader is mistaken to think that the Black youths are slaves in the Arizona example. However, the reality is the opposite. This is an example of legal slavery. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution declared:

> Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof
> the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any
> place subject to their jurisdiction (The Library of Congress n.d.).

These distractions, devices and errors indicate that perhaps the authors have as yet to have an honest discussion on the topic. They appear to be internally defensive, manifesting their defensiveness in the policy of "the best defence is an offense" and

5.4. The Next Extreme – Slavery as the New Godwin's Law

In the historical development of the debate it was shown how early jurists simply mentioned slavery as a fact of life. A change in society resulted in English translators of the Qurʾān seemingly studiously avoiding the word, "slave". A stage has now been reached where slavery is used as a framework to discuss other social issues, it being understood that slavery should be accepted as amongst the worst evils, just like Nazi is the ultimate insult in Godwin's law. [35]

Thus Kecia Ali discusses women's rights, and marriage specifically ,within the framework of the jurisprudence of slavery in, "Marriage and slavery in early Islam". The title would suggest to readers that just as ownership of another human being is unacceptable, so too should medieval concepts of marriage be unacceptable; or perhaps that both institutions were open to abuse by those in charge. In the author's words:

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[35] "Godwin's law is an internet maxim stating that as online arguments continue, the probability of people or groups being compared to Adolf Hitler or Nazis increases" (Ruth 2017)

> Discussing slavery in tandem with marriage will strike some readers as deliberately provocative. Ownership terminology and imagery may offend or bewilder. It would have been unexceptionable to early Muslim audiences, (2010: 6)

Slavery is also blamed as the origin of European racism. Eric Williams wrote in 1944:

> A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery. Unfree labour in the New World was brown, white, black and yellow; Catholic, Protestant and pagan (Holder 1992: 49)

These are indications that any discussion slavery will draw extraneous emotional factors which need to be sifted if one wishes to focus on the key question. This may be true today when factors external to Islam, but might be true for western history, are imposed on the "discourse" of Islam and slavery.

5. Conclusion

The sensationalism which the IS's slavery campaign generated and the resultant ammunition which it thus provided to anti-Islam factions have reduced a complex multi-faceted issue to over simplified arguments, honed down to a single vision of whichever party presents its agenda at a given time. The issue of slavery cannot be treated within the confines of Islam for there are many strands that transcend epochs, religions and civilisations. Similarly within Islam there are diverse strands. Each of these diverse issues is a separate topic which deserve independent study.

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Dear Sulayman

You have addressed some of the concerns I raised in your first draft, however not all. Nevertheless, this draft of the essay is stronger. I include in parenthesis, for the external moderator, my comments on your first draft.

(In discussing the contemporary question of slavery in Islam, arising out of the Islamic State's reviving of slavery after its establishment of the Caliphate in 2014, the essay engages meaningfully and provides a coherent picture. However, several areas need serious attention:

Layout, i.e. the re-arrangement of paragraphs (as I did above) is necessary. So doing, will make it easier for the reader to follow the essay.
References/sources: The essay often makes statements or points that demonstrate without references to any source. In other words, the author assumes that the case. This is methodologically a problem.
The absence of Muslim primary sources on the linguistic angle on slavery is problematic. The essay cites only Lane

and not primary Muslim sources. What was Lane's baggage? The essay is not terribly clear or as clear as it could be on the relationship between English dictionaries and Arabic lexicons. It appears as if the English usages are imposed on Islam's notion of slavery, at least in the beginning of the essay. This area can be tidied up considerably.

It is not clear why the essay brings race into the question. The essay does not demonstrate the link of race to slavery in Islam, both historically (pre-modern period) and the contemporary (the IS). It assumes what Eric Williams says is applicable everywhere. The essay will have to demonstrate it more convincingly with sources and references. It should provide sources or references then show the link between the two or omit the race question all together.

There are other areas of concern as raised on the margins that need to be addressed).

73%